

6202
A P O L O G Y:
O R, A
L E T T E R
T O A
F R I E N D;

Setting forth

The OCCASION, PROGRESS, and
IMPORTANCE of the present

CONTROVERSY.

By *SAMUEL FANCOURT.* *K*

SARUM, Printed by *Charles Hooton*, and sold by *E. Easton*, and
W. Collins, Booksellers in *Silver-Street*. And also by *R. Hett* at
the Bible and Crown, *R. Ford* at the Angel, and *J. Gray* at the
Cross-Keys in the *Poultry*, *London*. 1730. (Price 4 d.)





S I R,

***** FINDING a Disposition in the in-

***** F *****

quislitive Part of Mankind to look
farther into the *prejent Controversy*
than I at first expected, and
that *some* of my Opponents, in-
stead of encouraging a thoro' and impartial
Enquiry, endeavour to *prejuaice* the Reader
by *hard Names*, and *artful appeals* to the
Passions of the common People ; I shall intro-
duce this *Appendix* with an Account of the
Occasion, *Progress*, and *Importance* of the
Dispute before us. By which it will appear,
that (notwithstanding all that Mr. B. and
Mr. N. have since offered) the Debate is not
about a *Divine Attribute*, the *Omniscience* or
Foreknowledge of God, as they wou'd persuade
the World ; as, whether God *knows* all that's
true, or *foreknows* all that *will be* ? Which
both sides allow. But only, whether any
Thing that *will be*, *may not be* ? Or, whether
what is really *contingent*, can at the same time
be *certain* ? which they *affirm* ; and I *deny*.

Now the OCCASION of the Controversy
was this.

I published a Short *Discourse*, entitled, *The Greatness of the Divine Love exemplified and Display'd* *. Here I took Notice of *two Extremes*, both enemies to Christ and Godliness; either to think we may be saved *without* the Remedy, or to think we can do nothing *with* the Remedy. The *one* considers us as *whole*, and needing no Physician; the *other* considers us as *in the State of Devils*, and without Hope.

After this I printed another Discourse, and called it, *The Greatness of the Divine Love vindicated* †. Here I argued the *Possibility* of our *common* Salvation; urged the *Importance* of a firm *Belief* of it; and shewed the *Aburdity* of an absolute Decree of the Creatures *actual Fall*, and *eternal Perdition*.

Sometime after I annexed, to a *second* Edition of them *Both*, an *Appendix* about *Original Sin*. Where, amongst other things, I observed, that *by Creation* Man was placed in a *State of Trial* for *Life and Immortality*; that he *lost it* by the *Fall*; and by *Redemption* was restored to it again *. The *immediate* Design of which is to put us, not into a *State of Confirmation*, but of *Probation*.

As to the condition of the *Pagan World*, Paul, I conceived, had determined it to be a *State of Trial* too; when addressing himself to the *Athenians* who worshipped the *unknown God*, he tells them, *God had given unto all Life, and Breath, and all Things* †. For what end?

* Upon 1 John 4. 9. † From Hosea 13 9.

* Gen. iii. 15. Deut. xxx. 19. † Acts xvii. 25, 26.

It follows, *That they should SEEK the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and FIND him.* So that here we have the *Possibility* of their *seeking*, the *Possibility* of their *finding* God plainly supposed. Such Seekers grope for the Light, and shall not be wholly left in Darkness by him, who is the true Light, which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World, *John* i. 9.

In order to carry on the same Design, I judg'd it needful to say somewhat more concerning *Liberty* and *free Grace*; that I might shew the real *Consistency* of the *One* with the *Want* of saving Help, and of the *Other* with the sincere *Offers* of it. What therefore I next apply'd my self to, was to draw up a *Sketch* of my Thoughts upon *both* these Heads. The *Liberty* of the *moral Agent* I made to consist, partly in a *Power* to *act* or *not to act*, or to do *this* or *that*; and partly in a *Power* to *suspend* the *Act* of our *Choice* from being determined *for* or *against* the Thing proposed, 'till we have examined, whether it be really of a Nature to make us happy or no. And as to the *Help* which the Gospel brings, I observed, that if it ceaseth to be *free*, when it is *possible to be had*; it must much more cease to be *Grace*, when it is *impossible to be had*: And therefore that as the *Grace* or *Favour* doth lie in the *Attainableness* of saving Help; so the *Freeness* of the *Grace*, in the *Undeservedness* of the *Promise* unto those that *seek* it.

But I soon perceived, there was one *Difficulty* behind, which unless it cou'd be fairly *solved*, wou'd shake the Foundation of *universal* Help, and endanger the whole, *viz.* How to reconcile the real *Liberty* of the *accountable Creature* with the infallible *Foreknowledge* of the *Creator*. Hereupon I resolv'd to consider, what might be said upon the Head of *Prescience*, consistent with the *Honour* of God's *moral Perfections*, which (I hope I can truly say) I have religiously made the *End*, the *Rule*, and *Measure* of all my Enquiries upon this Subject. And after a mature Deliberation, I was determin'd to indulge unto every thought, that serv'd to illustrate or guard the *Glory* of the Divine *Purity* and *Love*; and also to inspect and examine every Sentiment which seem'd to cast a Gloom or Darkness upon them; shou'd the Opinion come never so recommended by the *Numbers*, the *Learning*, the *Antiquity*, or *Piety* of its Vouchers. And at length I came to this *Conclusion*, That the Actions of moral Agents, whilst *free*, are *only possible*, not *future*, and therefore are no proper Objects of such a Foreknowledge as supposes that an Event not only *may be*, but *will be*. This last Treatise I published under the Title of, *An Essay concerning Liberty, Grace, and Prescience*.

Here, I allow, I might have brought my *Reasoning* into a less Number of Pages, and that it might have been done, without any Disadvantage to my Cause in this Respect.

How-

(V)
However, if the *argumentative* Part be but *solid* and *conclusive*, I can see no Reason to be ashamed of the *Manner* of managing it, at least upon the *Comparison*. And if a Judgment may be formed from the *present Reception* of our Works, the *Reputation* of my *famous Essay* (as Mr. N. and his Reverend Friend are pleated *ironically* to call it) is as likely to live as *that* of their *famous Answers*. The *Difficulty*, *Variety*, and *Novelty* [as to many] of the Matters treated of, the *Regard* that was due to *myself*, as well as to the *Cause*, made me chuse to communicate my Thoughts in a Way, I judged not improper to prepare my Reader for a candid and impartial Examination of them; and to inculcate some Things the more frequently, that if any shou'd mistake me in such Passages, (as these Gentlemen have *both* done) it might appear to be owing to a Fault in their *Wills* as well as in their *Understandings*. To take no Notice here of the Difficulty of reducing the Substance of a various and large Correspondence upon these Points to a narrower Compass and stricter Method, without doing an Injury to the Sentiments and Arguments of my Friends. Besides, the *Table of Contents* at the End, and the *Preface* at the Beginning, make abundant amends for this supposed Fault; the *former* of which directs to the *Pages*, where the *principal* Things are treated of; and the *latter* reduces to *Six Heads* the *chief Points* in Controversy.

And

And as I had in such an open and ingenuous Manner declared my *inmost* Sentiments, without any *cenfurious* Reflections upon any particular *Persons* or *Bodies* of Men that might differ from me, fubfcribing my *Name*; I thought it but reasonable to let the World know before Hand, I fhould Regard no Arguments but what were grounded upon *Scripture* or *Reason*; nor fhould think fuch *Remarkers* worth my Notice, that appeared either fo *weak* they *could not*, or fo *perverfe* that they *would not* underftand what I had faid; or, that fhew'd a manifelt Difpofition to *quarrel* rather than to *argue*, or to expofe the *Author* rather than his *Caufe*; and that I expected they fhould not be afhamed of their *Names*; nor fatisfy themfelves to *carp* and object *here* and *there*, but that they would fairly enter the Lifts with me, *confute my Arguments*, and eftablifh a more *honourable* and *confiftent Scheme* of Thoughts than that which I had there laid down.

But tho' *one* or *more* of thefe *Conditions ALL* my *Opponents* have broke thro'; yet out of Regard to the *Subject*, which deferves the ftrictelt Difquifition, I fhall animadvert a little upon every one of them.

What I have faid concerning *Prefcience* has been attackt by *three* feveral Hands. The *first* was a *namelefs Author*; and his Answer is entitl'd, *The Divine Prefcience of free contingent Events vindicated*.

This

This Gentleman writes with a much *better Spirit* than the other *two*. He frankly owns p. 11.
the *Importance* of the *Subject*; that what I
have said for a thoro' and more *publick* Exa-
mination of it, is *very just*, which side soever
of the Question be true: And as to what I
mention against God's *absolute Decree* of the
Sin and *Misery* of his Creature, he *entirely* p. 6.
agrees with me. He allows that the ratio-
nal Creature, so far as it is an *accountable*
Agent, must be *free*: That *Contingency* and
Necessity are incompatible; making that to be p. 3.
necessary which *cannot but be*, and that to be
contingent which is *possible to be*, and *possible*
not to be: Nay, freely confesses, ———“ did
“ it appear to him to be a Contradiction, to
“ say, that God does foreknow contingent p. 2.
“ Events, he shou'd readily allow that there
“ are contingent Events notwithstanding, and
“ consequently, that there are some Events
“ which God *does not* foreknow. . For cer-
“ tainly, sais he, it is no more an Imperfection p. 4.
“ in the Divine Knowledge, that God cannot
“ *know* that, which to say he does know, im- p. 5.
“ plies a Contradiction, that which is not the
“ object of Knowledge, than it is an Imper-
“ fection in the Divine Power, that he cannot
“ *do* that, which implies a Contradiction, that
“ he cannot make the Part to be bigger than
“ the Whole, or the Sum of two even Num-
“ bers to be odd”. The Reason he assigns is
very substantial, and well worth inserting.
“ Were Contingencies and the Divine Pre-
science

“ science (adds he) considered with respect
“ to these incompatible, did these Ideas de-
“ stroy one the other, it wou’d be more agree-
“ able to all the moral Attributes of God,
“ and much more to his Honour, to deny such
“ a Prescience than to deny such Contingen-
“ cies ; for (says he) to deny the *former*, wou’d
“ be only to deny a Contradiction, which does
“ not at all affect the Omniscience of God :
“ But to deny the *latter*, and establish
“ an eternal universal Decree, whereby
“ God has eternally fixed every thing that
“ comes to pass, is (he goes on) so far from
“ being agreeable with, that it is directly
“ contrary to the moral Perfections of God :
“ For what is this, concludes that Author,
“ but to introduce an universal eternal Ne-
“ cessity or Fate, which casts a gloomy Shade
“ over all the Works of God, and God him-
“ self? ”.

But yet, as this Gentleman thought it pro-
per to *conceal his Name*, and that both from
the *publick* and *my self* too, he must excuse
me, if I take the less Notice of him ; being
at present determined (as I declared from the
Beginning) to have nothing to do with any
nameless Remarks *. Besides, as I own some
Events to be *contingent*, what may or may
not be ; so I no where deny God’s *Knowledge*
of their *Contingency*. To have proved any
Thing to the purpose against me upon this

* *Vid.* Essay, Preface, and my 3 Letters, Preface.

Head, he shou'd have shewn, there are Events not only *contingent*, but *future*, at the same time ; Events which *may never be*, and yet *will certainly be*. Whereas he is so far from demonstrating this, that he, in effect, gives up the Point, telling his Reader, " It is true, " we do not certainly know that any thing " *will be*, but what we certainly know *must be*, and cannot but be ". *i. e. future Con-* pag. 70.
tingencies are no Contingencies, but a flat Contradiction to our Understandings. However, as he has notwithstanding advanced some *Subtilities* in Defence of the *eternal Certainty of Contingent Events*, I shall not (when I come to reply to their Objections) *wholly* pass them by.

Mr. Norman comes out next, about eight Months after my Essay : And he calls his Letter *God's Fore-knowledge of contingent Events vindicated, &c.*

By Events here he must mean *future* Events, such as *will be* ; for no other Events are the proper Object of *Foreknowledge* ; and by *contingent* Events, such as *may not be* ; so ^{Let. p. 30.} he himself explains them. So that the Proposition is complex and consists of two Parts ; 1. That some Events *will be*, and yet *may not be* : 2. That God *foreknows* this. Now it is only the former I properly deny, *viz.* That there *are* any such Events. Therefore here, *i. e.* whilst the Debate is about *future Contingencies*, I again say, that the *Foreknowledge* of God is out of the Question ; and the Point
b incum-

pag. 23.
24.

incumbent upon Mr. *Norman* to vindicate, is; That there are Events both *future* and *contingent*; not that God *foreknows* them, if there be; which none denies. Indeed he endeavours to prove that some *contingent Events* not only *may* but *will be*, by *absolute Prophecies*; but then the Misfortune is, the Argument by his own Confession proves too much, *viz.* That his *contingent Events* are *necessary*; and what *must be*. It alters not the Case upon *what Account* they are *necessary*; let the *Reason* of this Necessity be what it will, yet if it be *true* that they are *necessary*, it can be no longer *true* that they are *contingent*.

Therefore after having waited about eight Months *in vain* for another Answer, which Mr. *Norman* seem'd to have read, and to be very fond of; nay, to consider as a *Supplement* to his own Letter; I at length resolv'd to draw up a *Short Review or fair State of the Points in Controversy*; Telling him I would suspend my *main Answer*, or a particular Reply, 'till we had seen his Friend's Performance. Here I took Occasion to expostulate with him about the Spirit he discover'd in his *Vindication*, which every one must look upon as an *angry* Production, tho' covered over with a *Cobweb* of Respect. This Remonstrance has made my Reverend Brother very uneasy indeed, and has put him quite out of Temper. He has hurried out an Appendix, in which he confesses he *treats me with less Ceremony*. But it is its own *Antidote*; and what

Append.
p. 15.

what I can consider only as the GROANS OF A DYING CAUSE. Accordingly he says, As to my own Part, it is not my present Intention to engage again in this Controversy, pag. 15. Had he thought fit to have *deferred* the Publication of it, 'till he had seen the *Whole* of what I promised in Answer to his Letter, it might have saved him the Trouble of a great many impertinent, unkind (not to say unjust) Reflections.

Indeed his *Reverend and learned Friend* (as he styles Mr. *Blys*) has been prevailed upon to join in the same *Cry*? saying, "it must be obvious to every unprejudiced Reader, how egregiously I have trifled with Mr. N. in my last Letter," p. 81.

This he is pleased to *say*, not to *prove*. And the Reason of his *saying* so is as *obvious* to any, that have read *his own* Letter. Mr. *B.* has the *Misfortune* to mistake the *grand Point* in Controversy, as well as Mr. *N.*; and is equally guilty of *Bitterness* in the Management of it; the very Things which I *charge* and *reprove* in my *Review*: where I shew at the same time, that the chief Arguments in my Essay remain strong and unanswered, notwithstanding all that Mr. *N.* had yet offered to invalidate them. This touches Mr. *B.* in a *tender Part*, stirs up the most feeling Sympathy, and for fear I shou'd find eno' in it to answer him also, he crys out before Hand; "If Mr. *F.* shou'd Answer me, and say No-thing, but dully repeat the old Story over

“ and over again, without attempting to in-
“ validate what I have replied, (which sort of
“ foul Play his Letter to Mr. *Norman* shews
“ him to be strongly addicted to) all the
“ World will cry out, he deserves to be ne-
“ glected; and I shall sit down satisfied with
“ this, that such Arguments as are firm against
“ his *Essay*, will never be shaken by a soft
“ *Echo*, or the *Essay REPEATED*”.

Here, (not to enquire, whether the *chief* of
his own Arguments be any thing more than a
dull Repetition of, or *heavy Enlargement* upon,
what his Friend and the *nameless* Author had
already advanced; only adorn'd with a few
scraps of *Latin* and *Greek*, and some *Pagan* and
other Quotations &c. to amuse the Ignorant,
and to gain a false Opinion of *good Literature*,
and *great Reading*;) Is it not a little surpriz-
ing, that they shou'd be both of them so
thunder-struck with an *Echo*, with a *soft Echo*?
Or, if an *Echo* from my *Essay* can do such
mighty Execution, what wou'd the *Essay* it
self do? They wou'd do well to *forbear* such
mean Stratagems to depreciate their Adver-
sary's Performances, lest the unlucky World
should take it in their Heads to think, there
are more than *Sounds* in my Letter, (as Mr.
N. wou'd have it) even *Arguments* that they
cannot bear.

But so it is, these Gentlemen are embarkt
in the same Cause, and think it for their *In-
terest* to say all the *hard* Things they can of
Mr. F. and all the *kind* Things they can of
one

one another. Therefore as the *one* tells the World, what Mr. B. *will* do, [*"A very ingenious Gentleman and worthy Divine of the Establishment will soon publish his Thoughts &c. and his Disquisitions, he's persuaded, will be very acceptable"*]; to the *other* in grateful Return tells the World what Mr. N. *has* done. "The Reader may see, says he, the Argument from Prophecies set in a just Light, and Mr. F's. evasive Answers to it examined, and clearly refuted by my *learned and ingenious Friend*, Mr. Norman, Minister of the Presbyterian Congregation here in *Portsmouth*, in a Letter to Mr. F.". And that the Reader might not be at any Loss, where to meet with this wonderful Production, Mr. Bliss condescends so low as to acquaint him with the very *Bookseller*, that Sells them; [PRINTED FOR R. HETT IN THE POULTRY.]

Mr. N.
Lect. 1.
p. 27.

Mr. B.
Lect.
p. 3.

But these learned and ingenious Gentlemen seem to forget, the World will consider them but as *one Person* in the present Dispute, and be ready to put them in Mind of the old Proverb, *Let an other man praise thee, and not thine own Mouth; a Stranger and not thine own Lips*. Was I disposed to glory, I cou'd tell them, what others, as learned and ingenious as either of my Opponents, and as little addicted to Flattery, have said also. But I forbear; the Lovers of Truth, and of the God of Truth, need not such low Motives to open their Minds to any Arguments in Defence

(XIV)
fence of the Divine *Purity* and *Love*. Yet
this I will mention; what those Gentlemen
despise, *seem* to despise as such a *Trifle*, is
with others of such a *Value*, " That it I am
" as happy in my next attempt [meaning in
" this my *Appendix*,] as I am, *at least* to far
" in this [meaning my *Letter to Mr. N.*] as to
" give just Ground to doubt; it will (as a
" worthy Correspondent) be a noble Attempt,
" and will justly entitle you to the Thanks
" and Approbation of those who will be glad
" to see the Principles of Virtue and true Re-
" ligion freed from those Embarrassments, which
" has been for many Ages upon them. Hop-
" ing that Nothing will discourage you ".
So that he was very Sensible that the Treat-
ment I met with, had a Tendency to intimi-
date me. And he is not the only Person, who
hath observed it, and expressed his Sympathy
upon this Occasion. Another Gentleman of
undoubted Penetration and Judgment writes
thus; " I am sorrow to find Mr. N. in his
" Letter bearing hard upon you, or saying any
" thing that might expose you to the Relent-
" ments of common People, for a Liberty of
" Reasoning which I think every Man ought
" to be indulged in, without being a sufferer
" for it in any Respect whatever". Adding,
That " any Man who wou'd not allow
" others the Liberty of declaring their Opi-
" nions, with their Reasons for them, without
" exposing them to Hardships and Inconveni-
" encies for so doing, CAN BE NO REAL
" FRIEND

" FRIEND TO TRUTH OR TO MAN-
" KIND.

And let no Man think this a pure *Inven-
tion* to load my *Adversaries*: I could, I
doubt not, obtain Leave to communicate their
Names, if needful. Besides, if I am rightly
inform'd, Mr. N. himself has been freely told
of the ungentle Manner of treating me in
this Controversy, even in his *Letter*: Which
I the rather mention, because he has told the
World, " Every one that has read his Letter
" must allow, that tho' he oppos'd Mr. *Fan-*
" *court*, it was with the utmost Respect, and
" that he made it his Business to support
" the Honour of my Character, tho' he could
" not agree with me in my Sentiments." Ad- *Ap. p. 15.*
ding, " This has been mentioned in his Com-
" mendations by some, and blamed by others,
" who thought he was more complaisant than
" there was occasion for."

But this I found the more difficult to be-
lieve, when I took Notice, how careful he
was not only to pass by several material
Points in which we were happily agreed, and
the most pinching Arguments by which my
differing Sentiments were supported; but that
he also indutritiously over-looked the several
Testimonies I quoted, with the Reasons
couched in them, for no other visible Motive,
but because they would screen me at least
from the Centure of Singularity, and abate the
Weight of such Authorities he was pleas'd to
urge on the other side; and wou'd shew, that
whether

whether I was *Right* or *Wrong*, the *Calvinists* were with me in the two chief Points, *viz.* *That eternal Foreknowledge and eternal Decrees are of equal Extent*; and *that it is impossible to prevent what will be*. Not to mention how diligent he was to put every thing he could in the most obnoxious Light, filling his Letter with *ungenerous* but *artful* Reflections, only solicitous that the *Roughness* (not to say the *Rudeness*) of the Sentiment might be wrapt up in *clean Language*: forgetting that it is the *Candour* of the *Thought*, and not the *Smoothness* of the *Phrase*, which is the best Evidence of *true Civility*.

And what made Mr. N.'s Conduct herein appear the more unkind and surprizing, was, Tho' I directed my *Essay* to no *particular* Person, yet I took special Care to let the World see, I was in the *utmost Friendship* with my supposed *Correspondents*; and how much I *reverenced* the *Memory* of our pious *Ancestors*, from whom I had the Misfortune to differ in some few Things. I therefore introduced my *Essay* with Professions of *Esteem* and *Affection* to such of my Brethren as were on the other Side of the Question, saying, "Tho' a Friendship under opposite Sentiments, especially in religious Matters, is a Paradox to most; yet, I was persuaded, shou'd we continue to differ in some things, it wou'd be our mutual Ambition to continue to love still." Observing in my first Letter, "I knew their Tenderness for the Reformation,

formation, and for the Honour of our excellent *Reformers* ; " only begg'd them to remember, " There is a wide Difference between the *Principles* of the *Reformation*, " and *this* or *that* particular *Doctrine* of the *Reformers* ". Concluding, " We then tender the Honour of that great Work in the best Sense, when we are tender of the excellent Principles that brought it on, viz. " A Supposition that their Forefathers were " not infallible, and that they had a Right " for themselves to re-examine what others " had embraced, and to reject what appeared " upon such Enquiry to be too hastily believed."

But to return ; if this was the unbiased Judgment of others concerning the *Spirit* of Mr. N.'s Letter, that it had more of the *Incendiary* than of the *Advocate* ; What will they say, what will they not say, when they have read his *fiery Appendix*, and have seen that *truly Catholick Spirit* which animates and adorns that *truly elaborate Performance* (as Mr. N. calls it) of his Reverend and Learned Friend. For the high *Encomiums* he has given it both in his *Letter* and *Appendix*, will justly entitle him to a *Share* in the Honour of that *Candour, Charity, and Benevolence* which runs thro' the Whole.

The Reverend Mr. *Bliss* calls his Letter, (which brings up the Rear) *A Vindication of God's Prescience of Contingencies upon the Principles of Reason, &c.*

c

But

But tho' the *Principles of Reason* are in his *Title-Page*; yet *other sort of Principles* appear in his *Book*. Here again the Argument is put in the most invidious Light, and the true State of the Question is changed. The Reader is made to believe, the Dispute between us is not, whether there be any *future Contingencies* to be foreseen? but, whether God *foresees* them? This is the more inexcusable in Mr. B. because in my Review of the Controversy I had so largely remonstrated against his State of the Question, assigning my Reasons; which the many Civilities he bestows upon me in his Post-script, shew he had seen.

I am sorry these Gentlemens Obstinacy in their Mistake shou'd make it needful to tell the Reader so often, That as I never deny'd there are *some* Events which are *future*, or what *will be*, and *other* Events which are *contingent* or what *may* or *may not be*; so, it was never a Doubt with me, whether God *foreknew* that the *former* WOU'D BE? Or, *knew* that the *latter* MIGHT or MIGHT NOT be.

Shou'd any one deny the *Sun stands still*, or that the *Moon is inhabited*; and shou'd he do this contrary to the Principles of *true Philosophy*. What then? Does he therefore deny God's *Omniscience*? Far from it. The same Person, was he ask'd, whether God *knows* that the Sun stands still? Or, that the Moon is inhabited? Wou'd immediately Answer; if it *be* so, he *knows* it. But the Question, the only Question in this Case yet remains,
viz.

viz. Whether the Sun stands still or not?
 Or, whether the Moon be inhabited, or no?
 so here, (for I write to the *unlearned*, as well
 as the *learned*) if there be any *future Contingencies*, I allow God *knows* it, and what they
 are: And if there be *no future Contingencies*,
 He *knows* it too, and therefore that there are
none to be *foreknown*. But the Question af-
 ter all, is, whether there be any Events that
 are both *future* and *contingent*? Or whether
 what God certainly *foreknows WILL BE*, be a
 Contingency? We are agreed about the mean-
 ing of the Terms. By *Contingencies* Mr. B.
 understands, as I do, such Events as *may* or
may not be. Thus they stand explain'd by
 himself. *p.* 77. "An Action, saith he, which is
 " the Object of the Divine Prescience depends
 " upon the free Choice of the Creature for its
 " Existence, that is (as he goes on) the Crea-
 " ture *may* or *may not* do it, as he thinks fit."
 And by God's *Prescience* of them, he intends
 with me, God's certain Foreknowledge that
 they *will be*. Therefore *p.* 78. he tells us,
 "An Action foreknown by God *will certain-*
 " *ly come to pass*". So that the real Difference
 lies here; tho' such Actions *will certainly*
come to pass; yet my Opponents will have it,
 they are notwithstanding *contingent*, and *may*
not be: Whereas I contend, if they *will cer-*
tainly come to pass, then they are *not contingent*,
 and *must be*: That they must either give up
 their *Certainty* or deny their *Contingency*. Now
 Mr. B. and Mr. N. are very sensible that this

is an *unpopular* State of the Question for *them*, and that the Voice of Mankind are against them. I don't at all wonder therefore at their great Concern, and that *Appendixes* and *Post-Scripts* are precipitated into the World to confute it, and to bring it back to a Controversy about a *Divine Attribute*; which gives them an Opportunity to work upon the *Superstition* and *Fears* of their Reader.

It is of absolute Necessity to clear up this Point, before we proceed. For till we are agreed about the true State of the Question, we fight in the Dark.

To begin with Mr. N's Appendix: "If Mr. F's word may be taken, I have, *sais he*, "changed the State of the Question". Then
My Let. has he only my *word* for it? Have I not gi-
p. 20, 21, ven him my *Reasons* too? Such strong Ones,
22. that the Light is even painful to his Eyes.

"But all who have seen Mr. F's Essay, must know (*sais Mr. N.*) "that *Prescience* is "mentioned in the Title, as one of the Heads "therein to be considered". Therefore I must deny God's Prescience of what *will be*. Sound Reasoning! By the same Argument he might prove I deny both *Liberty*, and *Grace* too: For these are mentioned in my Title also.

But "I have told the World in so many "Words that the Point in Dispute is, *whether* "God's Foreknowledge of what will be, ex- "tends beyond his Decree of what shall be, "p. 88". I have so; because it is the Point in Dispute *there*. But what then? Do I there- fore

fore maintain, that there are some Things *will be*, which God does not *foreknow*? Nervous Reasoning still! so far from it; that in the very Preface I lay it down as a Principle with me, *That all things future are the undoubted Object of the Divine Foreknowledge*. Don't I say too, p. 95? So the *ONLY Question* is, when any Thing is properly of the Number of such Things, as not only *may* come, but *are* to come? Yet wou'd any besides Mr. N. or his learned Friend dream, that this was the *only Question* in my *Essay*? Or, not rather, the *only Question* in *that Place*? Were these famous Rules of Interpretation to be brought unto our Bibles, I do but think, what Swarms of Contradictions we shou'd find there! As when our blessed Saviour tells his twelve Disciples, *Go not into the Way of the Gentiles, -----but go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel*, Mat. x. 5, 6. And yet in another Place says, *Go ye and teach all Nations, &c.* Mat. xxviii. 19. Speaking of *different Times*, as I am there speaking of *different Things*.

But "in my very Letter to him, I have, it seems, the same Thing." What Thing? That P. 42. there are future Contingencies; and yet that God does not foreknow them? So far from it, that in the very next Page I tell him, He maintains there are some Events both *future* and *contingent*; which I deny.

But Mr. N. goes on; "And as if our Author took no Care to be consistent with
" himself,

" himself, he roundly tells us, That Fore-
 " knowledge has nothing to do in the De-
 " bate, *p. 17.*" True, in *this* Debate about
future Contingencies: For that is the Subject
 I'm there speaking of. Having mentioned my
 third Principle, " That tho' all Things future
 " be the undoubted Object of the Divine
 " Foreknowledge; yet the sinful free Actions
 " of the Creature were not always future,
 " what would certainly be, but only possible
 " from Eternity, what might or might not
 " be." I add, " Is it not as plain as Words
 " can express? That the Dispute **HERE** is
 " not, Whether God foreknows all that *will*
 " *be*? You see I allow it in the strongest
 " Terms. ——— The only Dispute is about

- P. 15. " what *will be*". Now discoursing of the same
 Subject, *p. 17.* I tell him, " It is possible to
 " prevent what is contingent by his own Con-
 " fession. But ask him, Is it possible to pre-
 " vent what will be? If not, then what will
 " be, is not contingent. If it be possible,
 " prove the Possibility, and I am content."
 And then it immediately follows, *The Pre-
 science or Foreknowledge of God hath nothing
 to do in the Debate*, i. e. in *this* Debate here
 before us; and yet tho' the Case is so, very
 plain that the Mistake is wholly his own,
 Mr. N. in an Extasy cries out, *What a Wri-
 ter have I to deal with, that will say and
 unsay things, just as he pleases!* But this is
 Ap. p. 6. but one of the many Instances in which Mr.

N.

N. (to say nothing of his learned Friend here) has wrested my Words from their obvious and genuine Sense in this Controversy. However, he has his Apology ready at hand, and I must pass it by. "Should it appear that I have not taken you right, says he, in any of the Passages, which have been the Occasion of these Animadversions, I assure you this is owing to a Fault in my *Understanding* and not in my *Will*." Let. p. 42

By this Time it must, I think, be plain even to the meanest Capacity, That as the Question is really changed, so it is Mr. *Norman* that has changed it; and consequently, that the Fallacy I cited out of Dr. *Watts's* *Logick* is justly applied. And tho' the Judgment of no Man can alter the Truth of Things; yet such is the Opinion I have conceived of the Capacity and Integrity of that excellent Author, that if he will be so good as to communicate his Sentiments with his Reasons upon this Head, I shall, I assure Mr. N., be in as little Pain as himself about the Rev. Doctor's Determination.

Mr. *Bliss* joins with Mr. *Norman* in what follows. They wou'd persuade their Readers I have given up the *Contingency* of all Events, and make all Things *necessary*, or that all I contend for at last, is an absolute Fatality, and that every thing comes to pass by irresistible Necessity." The farthest from my Thoughts and contrary to the first Principle recited in my Review, viz. That some Things have been, Ap. p. 7.
P. Scr.
p. 81.

been, which might never have been, and that the Creature's Sin and Destruction are of this Number. But how came they by this wonderful Secret? Mr. N. endeavours to prove it thus; As *contingent Events* and *future Contingencies* are with Mr. F. the same, and future Contingencies are in his Opinion a *Con-*
Ap. p. 9. *tradiction*, *contingent Events* must be so likewise. *Right*; if by *contingent Events* he means (as he ought to do) such Events as are both *future* and *contingent*: *Wrong*; if by *contingent Events* he means (as he seems to do) such Events as are *only possible*, but *not future*; And let him make the best of it. Mr. B. in his *Postscript* argues after much the same Manner. "If, says he, the only Thing Mr. F. contends for, is, that there no *future Contingencies*; and if *future Contingencies* and *contingent Events* are the same, as he plainly makes them, He shou'd have said, if *contingent Events* be the same in this Controversy, as *future Contingencys*, (as every one who has but dipt into it, must needs know.) What then? Why it then follows, says Mr. B. that the only Thing Mr. F. contends for, is, that there are no such Things as *contingent Events*, or, in one word, as *Contingencies*. Hold; he should have said; or, in two Words, as *future Contingencies*. And then his Conclusion had been right indeed, but nothing to the purpose.

P. Scr.
p. 81

Tantumne rem tam negligenter!

These

These Gentlemen could never trifle with their Understandings to such a Degree, but that their Cause requires it. They can't bear the Mortification of writing, the *one a Six-penny*, the *other a Twelve-penny* Pamphlet, in Vindication of what no-body denies; nor of telling the World they are pleading for a *Divine Attribute*; whereas the real Truth is, they are only disputing away, an *undeniable* (I had almost said a *self-evident* (Principle, viz. *That none can prevent what will be.*

I have been thinking with my self, what should betray these Reverend Gentlemen into such a palpable and gross Mistake; (for after all one would not willingly suppose it the Effect of Contrivance and Design) and I apprehend it to be this.

Observing an Ambiguity in Mr. Norman's Title-Page, I explain'd his *contingent Events* by *future Contingencies*; for by the Events he there speaks of, (they being supposed to be the Objects of God's Fore-knowledge) he must design such as were *future*, as well as *contingent*. Now our Author, and Mr. B. in Imitation of him, make me to explain *future Contingencies* by *contingent Events*; and to intend by *contingent Events*, only *Contingencies*. A Piece of Sophistry too thin to impose upon the Judicious.

Shou'd a Person (taking Notice of the *equivocal* Sense of the Word *Taurus*, that it sometimes signifies a *Bull*, and sometimes a *Mountain of Asia*) express himself thus; *Tau-*
d
rus,

rus, *Mons Asia*, begins at the *Indian Sea*, and reaches Westward to the *Ægean Sea*; adding *Mons Asia* to limit and restrain the Sense. Would it be fair arguing, to say? If *Mons Asia*, or this Mountain of *Asia* begins at the *Indian Sea*, and reaches Westward to the *Ægean Sea*; and if *Mons Asia*, or this Mountain of *Asia* and *Taurus* are the very same, as this Person plainly makes them: it then follows, that *Taurus*, or in one Word, a *Bull* begins (according to this Gentleman) at the *Indian Sea*, and reaches Westward to the *Ægean Sea*. Whereas he should have said, then it follows, that *Taurus* or this Mountain of *Asia* does so. The Application is easy.

But I proceed to the IMPORTANCE of the Debate.

“What valuable Purposes *my* Essay is calculated to serve, says Mr. N. Time will shew”. True; and, in the mean Time, it had been but kind in my faithful *Advocate* to have shewn his Reader such of them, as have been already mention’d. Was it once acknowledged that the *Actions* of rational Agents considered as *free*, were not *eternally certain*, and therefore no proper Objects of a *certain* and *eternal Prescience*; it wou’d then, by the Confession of all Men, *certainly* follow;

That God is *capable* of making a *free* Creature, that is, with a Power to *chuse* or *refuse* either *Good* or *Evil*:

That

That they who first Sinned, whether Angels or Men, were *such* Creatures.

That God did not *decree from Eternity*, that any of his Creatures *shou'd Sin* or be *Miserable*.

That neither the *Purpose* of God wou'd have been *frustrated*, nor his *Knowledge* have been made *fallible*; tho' all the rational World had continued *innocent* and *happy*.

That God's *Decree of Reprobation* or *Pre-damnation* was not *absolute*, but *conditional*, *viz.* on Supposition only of the Creature's *Sinning*, or *persisting* in Sin.

That God is most *sincere* and *kind* both in his *Promises* and *Pre-monitions*; in as much as *Life* and *Death* are *fairly* set before us, that we might *chuse Life* and *live*. If my *Hypothesis* be true, it will follow;

That the *moral* and *penal* Evils foretold in Scripture, whether of a *Person*, *Family*, or *Nation*, were *no farther certain*, than the Creature by such an *Abuse* of its *Liberty*, as *might* have been *prevented*, had made them so.

That the *Prediction* of distant *Degeneracys*, *Apostacys*, or *Calamities*, was not design'd as a *fruitless* Display of the Divine *Omniscience*, or only to shew that such *Sins* or *Punishments* were now *unavoidable*; but what God (as became the tender *Father* and Supreme Governor of Mankind) was pleased to make use of (as a wise Physician) to *cure* or *prevent* those *Spiritual Diseases*, which his moral Subjects were *infected* with or *exposed* to: Or, upon a

Disappointment, to convince them, and the World about them, that there was a God that *beheld* their Mischief and the Spite (with the pregnant *Seeds* of Evil contained in them) and that *judged* in the World: In that he did foretell the Abominations, which such a *Spirit* or *Courge* of Rebellion *indulged*, wou'd at length betray them to; and pointed out the more precise *Place where, Time when, or Manner how*, he wou'd in such a Case correct and punish them.

That Man is a *moral* Agent in the *noblest Sense*; and that God hath given us an amazing *Proof* of his infinite *Understanding, Wisdom, and Power*, in *contriving, making and governing* Creatures, that have by their Maker's Gift, and in Imitation of his own excellent Nature, a Principle of *self determination*. And in a Word,

That the *Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Veracity* of God are in the highest Degree what we *conceive and must wish* them to be. For what imaginable Blemish can it be to any of God's *moral* Attributes, to make a Creature *so upright*, and with such a *full and such an equal* Power to *stand*, in its Day of Trial; that tho' its *Freedom* left it *possible* this Power *might* be *abused* (without which the Creature had not been *free*, had been no proper Subject of *Virtue or Vice, of Praise or Dispraise, of Reward or Punishment*;) yet it was not only *as possible*, this Freedom *might not* be *abused*, but *highly probable*? Nay, but *possible* that

a Creature with such a *free Principle*, and under such *Advantages* of discerning its true *Interest*, and for judging a right, thou'd notwithstanding in *Contempt* of its Maker's *Authority*, and to the *Hazard* of its own eternal *Happiness*, dare to neglect the Gift that was in it?

All which are Truths, that, by the Consent of every one, are certainly defensible upon my *Hypothesis*, particularly upon this *Principle*, that Sin was not *eternally certain*, and therefore no proper Object of a *certain* and *eternal Foreknowledge*: But which *at the best* are very doubtful upon the Supposition of the contrary; witness that remarkable Passage quoted already out of the Works of the sagacious and learned Mr. *Boyl*. "The greatest Wits who have laboured to reconcile an universal, absolute, infallible, and eternal Foreknowledge of the Deity with the Liberty of Man's Will have been reduced (says he) to maintain something or other, that thwarts some *acknowledg'd Truth* or *Dictate of Reason*."

These are *some* of the *many* valuable Purposes my Essay, I conceive, is calculated to serve. And what ever Ends their *Opposition* to such Purposes may serve, they are (if I mistake not) comparatively of so *little* Value, *that if their Expectations from them be very great*, to use Mr. N.'s Complement, *I am apt to think they will be disappointed*. But so it is, (as that great Man, Mr. *Addison* expresses it) "There is a sort of Gamesters, who are eternal-
ly

" ly upon the Fret, tho' they play for no-
 " thing. They are perpetually teizing their
 " Friends to come over to them, tho' they at
 " the same time allow, they shall neither of
 " them get any thing by the Bargain". *
 Speaking of an Atheistical Sett of Men that
 make all Things *necessary* : and yet they that
suppose all Events to be *certain*, nay, (since
 they are *foreknown*) *what must infallibly be*,
 say, in effect, the same Thing.

Besides, if a thoro' Enquiry into the Point
 before us be a Means, either to *clear up* an *eter-
 nal Prescience* of Sin *without a Decree*, from
 the *many Difficulties* that attend it ; or to
evince that Sin being really *contingent*, and
 what might not have been, it *could not*, in
 the Nature of Things, be the Object of such
 a *Prescience* (any more than of such a *Decree*)
 as supposes it to have been always *future*, or
 what certainly would be : I say, if either the
one or the *other* be the Result of a Re-exami-
 nation of the Subject, I have *one Advantage*
 I proposed by the Publication of my *Essay*,
 an Advantage far from being only *imaginary*,
 Let. p. 43. (as Mr. N. would have it.) And the Service
 it will do to true Religion, will, I doubt not,
 be found to be not only *real*, but much *grea-
 ter* than some Men seem to be sensible of,
 even against the *Deism* (not to say the *Athe-
 ism*) of the Age.

For, if my Hypothesis be true, then (as a
 worthy Divine told me in the Presence of Mr.

* The Spectator, Numb. 185.

(XXXI)
N.) I don't see what Objection a *Deist* can pretend against *Revelation*; and, I might add, nor an *Atheist* against the *Belief* of a *Deity*. For then, as God must be allow'd to be perfectly *good* and *just* upon the Principles of *Revelation* as well as *Reason*; so *real Liberty*, by the Confession of all Men, will stand upon a Rock, and *with it* the Necessity of admitting a *supreme*, a *wise*, and *powerful* interposing *Agent* in the *Creation* and *Government* of the World. Whereas, if all *Actions* and *Things*, in all their *Circumstances* and *Aspects*, were *eternally certain*, and sure to be, *previous* to any *Decree* or *Foreknowledge* of God, (which is what Mr. N. and Mr. B. contend for) then a *blind Fate* Superior to and *uncontroulable* by either *Creature* or *Creator*, necessarily ensues; which I take to be *down-right Atheism*. Hence Mr. Hobbs, a reputed *Atheist*, and *Fatalist*, urgeth the *contrary Hypothesis* in Defence of his Cause, as I observed in my Essay. " To which I cou'd add
" (says he) if I thought it good Logick, the
" Inconvenience of denying *Necessity*, as that
" it destroys both the *Decrees* and the *Pre-*
" *science* of God Almighty; for whatsoever
" God hath *purposed* to bring to pass by Man,
" as an Instrument, or *foreseeth* shall come to
" pass, a Man, if he have *Liberty* from *Ne-*
" *cessitation*, might *frustrate* and make not to
" come to pass; and God shou'd either not
" foreknow it, and not decree it, or he shou'd
" foreknow such things *shall be*, as *shall never*
" *be*,

"be, and decree that which shall never come
 "to pass *". And that the supposition that
 all Events were *eternally certain*, serves the
 Cause of an *Universal Necessity*, which is real
Hobbiſm, (whether it served the particular
 Views of ſome reputed Atheiſts or no) I have
 the Judgment of *Epicurus* on my Side, who by
 Mr. B's own Confeſſion was a *ſubtle* and *a-*
cute Genius. "He was afraid, it ſeems, that
 "if he admitted every Proposition to be ei-
 "ther true or falſe" (*i. e.* antecedent to the
 the Determination of every free Agent to make
 them ſo ; for that I take to be his Senſe) "he
 "muſt alſo have admitted that every thing
 "came to paſs by *Fate*. For if either Side
 "of a Proposition, *the affirmative or negative*,
 "was *true from Eternity*, he thought it muſt
 "have been *certain* ; and if *certain*, then *ne-*
 "*ceſſary* ; and ſo *Fate* and *Necceſſity* wou'd
 "be Eſtabliſhed". † This is *his* way of Rea-
 ſoning ; and it is too nervous for me to tear a
 pieces. Mr. B. may think it eno' to tell the
 World, "He fell into it, not to prejudice,
 "we may be ſure, but on purpoſe to promote
 "the Cause of Atheiſm". But ſuch Answers
 will not do in this *inquiſitive* Age, even a-
 mongſt thoſe, who are for *Free-thinking* only in
 his *ſober ſenſe* ; which even he himſelf allows
 to be every Man's *Privilege* as well as *Duty*.
 And yet theſe very learned and ingenious Gen-
 tlemen are ſtill flying to this mean Refuge :
 When

Mr. B.
 P. 2.

* See M. Hobbs of Liberty and Necessity, p. 79, 80.

† See Mr. Bliff's Letter, p. 19.

When they are *pinch'd*, instead of producing their *hard Arguments*, they put off their Reader with *hard Names*. Thus *one while* we are told by *Mr. B.* I have the Credit of having *Epicurus* on my Side, who was one of the chiefest well-wishers to Atheism amongst the Philosopher. And *another while* we are told by *Mr. N.* "He cannot but take Notice "with Concern, that as I have revived the "*Socinian* way of Reasoning against the Force-
 "knowledge of God; so I go into their manner of interpreting of Scripture in Defence of it." p. 12.
Mr. N.
p. 16.

Now to such sort of Insinuations to prejudice the Reader against a fair Examination of the Argument, I shall answer once for all,

1st, "The Sum of my Reasoning (by *Mr. B.*'s own Acknowledgement) is this, whatever is foreknown *must* come to pass. And "therefore to suppose God foreknew the sinful Actions of Men is to destroy the Freedom of their Wills (he should have said, is to suppose the Freedom of their Wills destroyed) "and to make their Sins *necessary* and "*unavoidable*." Now if this be *Epicurizing* or *Socinianizing*, *Mr. B.* and his Friend will find it difficult to get clear of the Charge themselves. For is it not the Sum of his Friend's Reasoning too? Nay, and of that learned Prelate *Bp. Tillotson*, whose Words he cites? *An Event*, says *Mr. N.* *because it is*
 c known,

known, must infallibly be *. And is it not the Sum of Mr. B.'s Reasoning also? When he tells us, *that Sin, supposing the Foreknowledge of it, MUST be, and CANNOT BUT be.* † And yet rather than *not say* an ill Thing of Mr. F, lee how these Gentlemen have dressed up *their own Principle* !

“ This Objection, says Mr. B. is indeed of
 “ very great Antiquity ; but it had its Rise
 “ among those that never heard of a Revela-
 “ tion, and has since prevailed chiefly amongst
 “ such as are far from bearing it a good Will.
 “ Cicero in particular, he goes on, has set it
 “ in a clear Light. His Reasoning is to this
 “ Effect : “ *If Futurities are foreknown, a*
 P^g 32. “ *Series and Chain of Causes must be allow-*
 “ *ed ; the consequence of which will be, that*
 “ *every thing that is done, is done thro' Ne-*
 “ *cessity ; and this will evacuate all just and*
 “ *wholesome Laws. 'Twill put an End to all*
 “ *Admonitions and Reproofs, and leave no*
 “ *room for Piety or Prayers. Wherefore one*
 “ *of the two Evils must be chosen. Either we*
 “ *must give up the Freedom of Man's Will, to*
 “ *maintain the Prescience of God, or give up*
 “ *the Prescience of God to secure Man's Free-*
 “ *dom. For both cannot consistently be held*
 “ *together* ”, says Cicero.

Therefore 2dly, Their Way of Reasoning upon these Heads is either *right* or *wrong*.

H

* Mr. N. Letter p. 33.

† Mr. B. Letter, p. 63.

(xxxv)
If it be *wrong*, like Men of *Reason*, let Mr. B. and Mr. N. expose and *confute* it: if *right*, like Men of *Probity*, let them own and *acknowledge* it. Till then I cannot but take Notice with *equal Concern*, that it is too mean and altogether below their Characters, whether considered as *Gentlemen*, as *Disputants* or *Divines*, to be so often appealing to the Passions of the weak and ignorant, who they know are governed more by *Sounds* than *Ideas*, by *Names* than *Arguments*. Indeed Mr. Norman tells me, " he is satisfied, I am as far " as any Person living from being in the *Socinian* Scheme in other Respects". And Mr. Bliss tells his Friend, tho' " my way of " Reasoning has too natural a Tendency to- " wards Atheism; yet he believes it is as remote from my Design, as from any Man's " living," p. 10. But as I am not to be *intimidated* by *hard Names*, so neither to be *soothed* by *flattering Concessions*. Whilst *Truth* is with *Epicurus*, I desire to be an *Epicurean*; whilst *Truth* is with *Cicero*, I desire to be a *Ciceronian*; whilst *Truth* is with *Socinus*, I desire to be a *Socinian*; so whilst *Truth* is with *Arminius*, I desire to be an *Arminian*; and whilst *Truth* is with *Calvin*, I desire to be a *Calvinist*: But to affect to be thought either *one* or *other*, farther than *Truth* is with them, and especially *that Truth* which is according to *Godliness*, I take to be the *Bane of the Reformation*, and our great Clog to its *Progress*. A Temper our blessed Sa-

(XXXVI)
viour directly points at, and severely Censures,
John v. 44. How can ye believe, which re-
ceive Honour one of another, and seek not the
Honour, that cometh from God only. Let us
endeavour rather to be of that Number to whom
Christ saith, *Blessed are ye, when Men shall re-*
vile you and persecute you, and shall say all
manner of evil against you I will do for my
Sake. [And the preaching a possible Salvation
to poor Sinners, is, I doubt not, *Christ's*
Cause.] Rejoice, saith he, and be exceeding
glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven:
for so persecuted they the Prophets which
were before you, *Mat. v. 11, 12.*

These Gentlemen may, if they please, re-
present the *actual Fall* of Angels and Men,
with all the wickednesses and abominations
that have appeared in the World since, as what
were from Eternity *jure* to be; and may en-
deavour to fright Men into a *Belief* of this
frightful Opinion, by telling them, that the
contrary way of Reasoning has a natural *Ten-*
dency to Nihilism: But sure I am, that to say
all our *Actions* and *Fates* were certain, ante-
cedent to any *Decree* or *foreknowledge* of
God, (which is their Opinion) is to set up a
Deity that can neither HURT nor HELP us;
and that can no more make our *Persons* or *Con-*
ditions better or worse than they really prove,
than he can *change* an eternal certain *Truth* in-
to an eternal certain *Falshood*; than he can
make a Thing *to be*, and *not to be* at the same
time. A way of Reasoning that has not only

a natural *Tendency* to *Atheism*, but is (as has been observed) the *very Thing* it tell : which made me to say in my *Essay*, " whilst some " are guarding against what they falsely call the " *Blasphemy* of *Socinus*, they would do well " to have a Care of the *Atheism* of *Spinoza*. " That the Liberty or Freedom of the will " consists in an indifferency to *this* or *that* ; " this Maxim, says a certain Correspondent, " your Adversaries absolutely deny, and it appears to them manifestly false, since no such " indifferency, they think, *is* or *can* be found " in a rational Agent, *finite* or *infinite*", i. e. all Things are *absolutely Necessary*, and what were ever beyond the Power of the Creature, or of the Creator either to prevent or alter. And so says Mr. *Hobbs*, " Thus (you see) how the " Inconveniencies which his Lordship object- " eth, must follow upon the holding of *Necessity*, are avoided, and the *Necessity* itself " *demonstratively proved* "*.

For my Part, I therefore make God my *Trust* and *Confidence*, because I believe the *Evil* I fear, is not so *certain*, but that it *may never be* ; and the *Good* I hope for, is not so *lost*, but that it *may* be yet *obtained*, without making that which was *ever true*, *not true*. Such a Notion they may call (if they please) a taking away the Transactions of Mankind from under the Divine Government. But the real Tendency is to establish a Belief of an interposing

* See Mr. *Hobbs* Treatise of Liberty and Necessity, p. 79.

terposing Providence, (according to our Saviour's Words, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*) and makes our *Prayers and Praises*, our *Hopes* and *Obedience*, a *reasonable Service*.

As to Mr. N.'s Complaint in the Conclusion of his Letter: "As often as he ----
" considers the languishing State of Religion
" amongst us, and that owing, in a great
pag. 45. " measure, to our *Disputes* and *Contentions*,
" he cannot but be sorry that I shou'd open a
" fresh Scene of Debate". To which I answer,
That the State of *practical Religion* amongst
us is very languishing, must be acknowledged.
But whether it be owing so much to our *Dis-*
putes, as to our *Contentions* in Disputing, is
the Question: In which kind of Debates who
have been the *Aggressors*, and the *chief Of-*
fenders, let others judge. But it is no un-
common Thing to *foment* Divisions, while we
pretend to *lament* them. My Heart is full of
Benevolence to all my differing Brethren; and
I appeal to our private Correspondences, with
what *Candour* and *Civility* the Argument has
been discussed with *many* of them. But some
Men are so *magisterial* and *infallible*, that
every one must pass for a *Criminal*, who will
not submit unto their *Dictates* as *Oracles*.

As to Mr. N.'s *Sorrow* for what I have
done, his very *Sorrow*, if *rational*, is a *Con-*
futation of his *own* Principles. Therefore,
when a worthy Friend of his Sentiments ex-
pressed his *heartly* Wishes, that I would not
proceed

proceed in this *Controversy*; I remember I thus expostulated with him. "According to
 " your Principles, it is either *true* that I *shall*,
 " or *true* that I *shall not* publish any thing
 " farther upon this Subject. If true that I
 " *shall*, your hearty Wishes will certainly be
 " *fruitless*; if true that I *shall not*, they are
 " as certainly *needless*. When you exhort me
 " to *prevent* what *will be*, or to *forbear* what
 " *will not be*, said I; don't you *smile*? Why
 " shou'd any good Person be *offended*, because
 " I am willing not only to *believe*, but to
 " *prove* that God is *good*? Or, why are any
 " *angry* with me for confessing, I *cannot pre-*
 " *vent what will be*? Notwithstanding all
 " their Anger, I might defy them to do it."

Then as to what Mr. N. adds: "That it
 " is about a Subject which so few are capable
 " of understanding, and at a Time when there
 " is so prevailing an Inclination to Infidelity,
 " and when my excellent Abilities might have
 " been much better employed in defending our
 " common Christianity". I wou'd not have
 him offended, if I endeavour to convince the
 World, that the Subject is not so *mysterious* as
 these Gentlemen would pretend: Besides, who
 guards against the *Growth* of *Infidelity* best?
 They who make *Revelation* to plead *for*, or they
 who make it to plead *against* the *Purity* and
Love of God. My Opinion is, that to shew we
 have a *real Gospel* to believe, is not the most
 improper Means to strengthen our *Christian*
Faith; and to prove we are Subjects really
capable

(XI)
capable of Christianity, is not the unlikeliest Argument to enforce the *Practice* of it. Our *Foundations*, it's true, are struck at; and for that very Reason all our *Wisdom* and *Zeal* are but eno' to defend them. The World is running head-long into *Fatalism*, and plead *infallible Foreknowledge* on one side, and *eternal Decrees* on the other side, in Defence of their Absurdities. We ought not to forget that these first *Principles* of *natural* and *revealed* Religion, [*viz.* The *Liberty* of the *moral Agent*; and the *Reality* of our *State of Trial*;] tho' they may not strike the Affections so warmly, as some *other Doctrines* which are built upon them; yet they lie at the Root, and preserve the very *Vitals* of *all Religion*.

Religion there can be none, without a moral Difference of Things; a moral Difference of Things there cannot be, where there is no Place for Action; and proper Action there cannot be, without Liberty; and Liberty there cannot be, where only one side is possible; and only one side is possible, when to suppose the OTHER, is to make that to be not true, which was ever true: But now, if God ever knew that the Creature WOU'D act THUS, it was euer true the Creature WOU'D act THUS; and so to have acted otherwise was ever impossible; as impossible as to have made what was EVER TRUE, to be NOT TRUE.

Mr. B.
pag. 2.

This Mr. B. may call, if he please, the denying *one Attribute* to secure the *Rest*. But might I not more justly retort, that to maintain

tain his own Hypothesis, (which, I doubt not to shew in this Appendix, has no solid Foundation, neither in *Reason* nor *Revelation*) he, in effect, denies *many* Attributes to secure *one*, nay, to secure the *Name* of one? Does he not deny God's *Holiness*, *Justice*, *Goodness*, and *Truth*; at least deny them their *proper Glory*, only to secure a *Power* in God to *know* NOTHING to be SOMETHING? Or, that all the Villanies of the World *ever would be*, when it was only true from Eternity that they *might be*?

But I have detained you too long from what I first promised, *viz.* my *Appendix*, which here follows: I shall therefore subscribe my self,

S I R,

July 27, 1730.
N. Sarum.

Your most Obedient Servant,

S. F.

ERRATA.

Page 28, lin. 3. for *the* read *their*. Line 5. for *judged* read *judgeth*. p. 35. line 2. from the bottom, for *our* read *one*.
Appendix, Part I. p. 11. line 11 from the bottom, dele *will*.
In the last line dele *in*.

4 00 58